Reminiscences of Minnesota during the territorial period /

REMINISCENCES OF MINNESOTA DURING THE TERRITORIAL PERIOD.* BY HON. CHARLES E. FLANDRAU.

* Read before the Society, April 25, 1898.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I have always supposed that the legitimate province of a historical society is to record and preserve past and current history; and, so believing, I feel as if I were perpetrating a wrong in offering to you this evening the collection of anecdotes, jokes, and frivolous sayings and doings that I have strung together in this paper. My only excuse is, that it was not originally prepared for this dignified body, but for the amusement of a much lighter audience, and that it does contain some matters relating to our early days, although of a character that can hardly be brought under the designation of history. I never made any pretense to being a historian; but much is expected of a western man, and he is never justified in declining to do anything that the emergencies of the situation demand of him. To give you an illustration of what appalling straits he is sometimes driven to: Once, in the very early dawn of civilization on our frontier, I had the hardihood to get up a thanksgiving celebration, the principal part of the programme being a sermon from a neighboring missionary. For some reason, he failed to put in an appearance, and I was compelled to do the preaching myself. As my audience was easily imposed upon in the article of sermons, I succeeded quite creditably.

PECULIAR EARLY IMMIGRANTS.

I thought at first of chatting about the early days of St. Paul, and relating some of the many anecdotes which exist about our pioneer residents; but, on reflection, recalling what 198 my old friend, Joe Rolette, once said, “If these old settlers ever collide with me, I'll write

a book," I deemed it delicate ground to tread upon, although extremely fertile in fun and amusing incidents, as we had a most curious agglomeration of interesting characters here in the early times. I may, however, mention some without treading on any one's toes.

There was a Scotch gentleman here, whom I knew very well, who seemed to have plenty of means to gratify all his whims. He had the reputation of having once been a minister of the gospel,—what he was doing here no one seemed to know definitely,—and, as was usual in those days, no one cared very much. After living here some time he conceived the idea of going over to the Pacific country by way of British Columbia; his objective point may have been the Fraser river gold diggings, but I forget. He fitted out a party, and when in the wilds of the north country he became frozen in and was compelled to spend a long winter in camp; provisions soon gave out and the party were compelled to eat their pack animals for support. My friend selected a fat young mule for his especial eating, and allowed no one to share it with him. In the course of the winter he consumed the whole animal. He preserved one of its dainty hoofs, and when he got back to civilization he had it beautifully polished and a silver shoe put on it, and always at his meals he placed it by the side of his plate. People thought it was a salt cellar, or some article of table furniture, but when asked by some one what part it played in his menu, he would relate his adventure and say, that he had eaten so many awfully bad dinners out of that mule that he always kept its hoof near by to remind him of them so that his present dinners might be improved by contrast.

He was very fond of sherry, and could not get just what he wanted here, so he sent to London and imported an immense hogshead of the best he could purchase. He decanted it into large demijohns, and placed them all around his room. He then went to bed and never left it until we carried him out feet foremost. I did my best to avert this calamity, but my powers of absorption were too limited to get away with the sherry in time.

The original population of all this country was of course the Indians. The next people to arrive were the whites, who 199 were either traders or soldiers, and in referring to the

inhabitants they were always designated either as white men or Indians. At quite an early period an officer of the army from the South was stationed at Mackinac, or some other northwestern post, and brought with him two black servants, George and Jack Bonga. When he was ordered away, these two men remained behind and took service in the American Fur Company as voyageurs. They married into the Chippewa tribe, and George became quite a prominent trader and a man of wealth and consequence. I was his guest for two weeks at Leech lake just forty-two years ago, when I made a canoe voyage to the source of the Mississippi. He was a thorough gentleman in both feeling and deportment, and was very anxious to contribute to my pleasure during my stay with him. He loved to dwell upon the grandeur of the chief factors of the old Fur Company, and, to show me how royally they travelled, he got up an excursion on the lake, in a splendid birch bark canoe, manned by twelve men who paddled to the music of a French Canadian boat song, led by himself. George was very popular with the whites, and loved to relate to the newcomers his adventures. He was about the blackest man I ever saw, so black that his skin fairly glistened, but was, excepting his brother Jack, the only black person in the country. Never having heard of any distinction between the people but that of Indians and white men, he would frequently paralyze his hearers when reminiscing by saying, “Gentlemen, I assure you that John Banfil and myself were the first two white men that ever came into this country.”

CELEBRATION OF NEW YEAR'S DAY.

I am rather inclined to think that in the early days we had a good deal more fun than we do now, but perhaps our pleasures were not curbed with the same bit as they are at present. The early settlers brought out with them the old fashioned way of celebrating New Year's day, and when that event occurred, the whole town was alive with sport. Everybody kept open house and expected everybody else to call and see them. No vehicle that could carry a party was allowed to remain idle, and from morning until late in the night the entire male population was on the move. The principal houses were those of the Ramseys, the Gormans, the Borups, the Oakeses, 200 the Warrens, the Coxes, the Robertsons, and

the Rices. The Reverend Dr. Andrew Bell Paterson, rector of St. Paul's Church, lived out where Hamm's brewery now stands. Mrs. Goodhue, widow of Minnesota's first editor, lived on the west side, about opposite the foot of Jackson street, and there were many others well worthy of mention who now escape me. We also had Fort Snelling, with its Old School Army officers, famous for their courtesy and hospitality, and the delightful household of Franklin Steele, the sutler; and there was Henry H. Sibley, at Mendota, to whom the finest amenities of life were a creed: all of whom assisted on New Year's day. There was great strife among the entertainers as to who should have the most elaborate spread, and the most brilliant and attractive array of young ladies to greet the guests. A register of the callers was always kept, and great was the victory of the hostess who recorded the greatest number.

My first New Year's day in St. Paul was in January, 1854, forty-four years ago; it was my entree to St. Paul society. Four of us, all young frisky fellows, started out together with a good team and made one hundred and fifty calls by midnight. The party was composed of Mr. Henry L. Moss, Horace R. Bigelow, who was my old partner, Mr. Charles H. Mix, and myself. Whether we drank at every fountain that gushed for us on that day, I will leave to the imagination, after saying that only the most delightful impressions of the event linger in my memory. The custom died out only a dozen years ago.

While speaking of New Year's day, I must not forget my first New Year's day among the Indians. It was in 1857. The Sioux know the day and celebrate it. How they discovered it I am unable to say, but probably they learned it from the French missionaries. They call it “Kissing day.” I was the United States Agent for the Sioux, and was detained up at the Yellow Medicine river for some reason, I forget what. I was informed that it would be expected of me to give all the women who happened to be about the Agency a present. So I had several barrels of gingerbread baked, and purchased many bolts of calico, which I had cut up into dress pieces, ready for delivery. About ten in the forenoon the squaws began to assemble near the Agency, and I seated myself in the main room to await events. At first they were shy (I was 201 not the grizzly old fellow then that I am

now). Soon an old *wa-kon-ka* came sidling up like a crab, and gave me a kiss; then came another, and another, until, young and old, I had kissed and been kissed by forty-eight squaws. I kept an exact tally, especially of the young and pretty ones. They all got their gingerbread and dresses, and went away very happy; whether their joy rested wholly on the cakes and calico, I never was exactly satisfied in my own mind. So you see the civilized and the savage do not differ very much in their methods of amusing themselves. It is a serious question whether modern innovations will be an improvement over the past in such matters.

EARLY SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

St. Paul from its earliest settlement was a social phenomenon. Our ideas of a frontier Mississippi river town of forty years ago, naturally suggest everything but culture, refinement and elegance; yet St. Paul possessed them all in a very marked degree. By a singularly happy combination of circumstances, differing absolutely from all other remote frontier towns that I know of, the earliest settlers, who gave the place its social tone and character, were cultivated gentlemen and ladies. Dr. Borup was a Dane; he was a fine musician; he had a charming family; he erected a spacious and, for that day, elegant mansion, and entertained profusely. I have attended musical soirées at his house, led by himself with the violin, accompanied by two grand pianos played by members of his family.

Mr. William Sitgreaves Cox, an old navy officer, was a charming gentleman, at the head of one of the most interesting, cultivated and refined families it was ever my good fortune to become acquainted with. One of his daughters, Miss Hitty, was so accomplished a musician, that it was said she never played anything but music of her own composition. Another daughter, Mrs. Pope, who presided in his household, used to entertain the friends of the family at grand dinners and *petits souper's* , that would have made the habitués of Washington and Newport green with envy.

Mr. John E. Warren, and his brilliant and beautiful wife, maintained an establishment, to enjoy the privileges of which was a liberal education, and a joy forever. The mere recollection 202 of her fascinating conversation and sparkling wit is enough to make an old fellow young again. Governor Ramsey, and his hospitable and beautiful wife, were always a center of social eminence, as were also Col. Robertson, Judge Emmett, and their accomplished wives. I merely mention these names as types of a great many delightful families that adorned our city in its infancy, and impressed upon it the indelible stamp of cosmopolitan excellence.

Besides these superior domestic nuclei, we had a host of single gentlemen, young and old, who would have adorned the society of any city. Of course we were not lacking in the rough and vicious element, but it never dominated to the extent of giving color to our society.

There is one circumstance which has always impressed me with the idea that Minnesota, and especially St. Paul, the capital, was favored with an exceptionally intelligent population in its infancy; and that is, that at the very first session of the Territorial Legislature, in 1849, provision was made for the establishment of a Historical Society, an institution which one would think would be most remote from the thoughts of a border people, whose interests usually center in peltries, ores, and lumber. Yet it was accomplished, and has grown from the germ then planted into a repository of historical knowledge scarcely equalled west of the Alleghanies, which is stored away in a library of nearly sixty thousand volumes.

Most western towns spring into life from the force of especial circumstances, a rich deposit of gold, silver, or coal, is discovered; extensive forests invite the lumbermen; at once a rush of people is directed to the spot, and a town is built. It has no antecedents to give direction to its social, moral or intellectual character, and these elements must reflect the attributes of its first inhabitants. Mining towns generally exhibit the lowest and roughest features; gambling, drinking, and lawlessness predominate. Lumber towns rarely present much refinement. While men engaged in that pursuit may be estimable and industrious

citizens, you would not, except in rare instances, select them to fill the chair of esthetics in a school of sociology.

The marked difference in favor of St. Paul, in my judgment, arises from the fact that it had antecedents; that its first population 203 was not assembled at the call of any particular enterprise, and was therefore not tagged with any special trade, mark. It converged to this point largely for the reason that it was the head of navigation of the great Mississippi, thus offering a reasonable prospect of a commercial city; that it had an exceptionably salubrious climate; and that its first and principal settlers had previously occupied the country and had been educated under the elevating social influences of the great fur companies, whose officers were the most aristocratic and commanding men to be found in any country. They were most exacting in their demands of obedience, respect, and loyalty from all their subordinates; and they administered justice in return, based on a broad intelligence and tempered with generosity. Such initial influences could not fail to make themselves felt as the town progressed toward metropolitan proportions, and they are still visible. This view of mine may be without substantial foundation, but there is one thing I know, that St. Paul possesses certain social attractions which invariably impel people who have to leave the place with a desire to return, no matter where they go. I never knew an officer of the army, who had been stationed here, that did not want to remain, and, if compelled to leave, did not wish to return, and such seems to be the universal sentiment. You think it over, and if you discover a better reason for the social superiority of St. Paul over the average western town, let me know what it is.

While I am speaking of the remarkable culture and refinement of St. Paul in its early days, I ought to mention that we had a number of gentlemen here who were extraordinary chess players and very early formed a chess club. Judge Palmer was at the head of it. He was a second Paul Morphy in skill at the game. He could turn his back, shut his eyes, and play three or four games at the same time without seeing either the board or the men, and

generally win them. You must remember that chess is a very scientific game, and is not indulged in by cowboys or frontiersmen as a general thing.

Very soon after St. Paul began to assume city proportions, a little town down the river by the name of Hastings began to appear in evidence. I don't believe many of you know the origin of its name. It was called after General Henry 204 Hastings Sibley, and the fact that he was its chief sponsor did much to attract to it some very cultivated people, including some good chess players, among whom a Maryland gentleman named Allison was the leader. As soon as acquaintanceship was established between the two towns, a chess club was formed in Hastings, and games used to be played between the two places by mail, each move being fully discussed by the club making it, over a good champagne supper. These games sometimes lasted a whole winter, as mails were only semi-occasional. It is a rare thing to find towns situate on the very border of civilization, amusing themselves in such an esthetic manner.

PIONEER MISSIONARIES.

It may not be inappropriate on this occasion to refer to the early struggles of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota. As has ever been the case in the Northwest, the French Catholic missionaries were first in the field. They labored with the Indians for long years with their accustomed fidelity and self-sacrifice, and I have no doubt did as much good as missionaries usually accomplish among savages. From their somber costume the Sioux called them *she-na-sapa* (the black blankets).

About sixty years ago, the American Board of Foreign Missions sent out Protestant missionaries of the Presbyterian faith, who selected stations at Traverse des Sioux, Lac qui Parle, Lake Winnibigoshish, and perhaps other points. They labored faithfully among the Sioux and Chippewas until the outbreak of the Sioux in 1862, which practically dispersed the Sioux and Winnebagoes and drove them out of the state. When the whites began to inhabit the state in 1846, and afterward, of course they were accompanied

by their ministers of all denominations, and they established churches in all the settlements; but the Episcopalians were the weakest of them all. The first churches of that denomination were established in St. Paul and St. Anthony in the early fifties. The one in St. Paul was known as Christ Church, and had a very small frame structure on Cedar street, exactly in the rear of the present Globe Building, and on the spot where now stands the rear part of H. M. Smyth's printing house. The church boasted 205 a steeple, but it was so ridiculously small that the irreverent dubbed the whole structure “The church of the holy toothpick.”

Minnesota was then part of the diocese of Wisconsin, which was presided over by Bishop Kemper, the missionary bishop of the Northwest, and one of the dearest and best old men it was ever my good fortune to meet. He used to make occasional visits into Minnesota, and perform the functions of his sacred office wherever they were needed. His services were usually held in the shanty of some settler, and the people would flock to see and hear him very much as they would have attended any unusual show. You must remember that Episcopalians were not an emigrating people, and are generally the denizens of cities, so that his vestments were a very unusual sight on the border.

The first time I heard him he preached in the unfinished kitchen of Captain Dodd's shack in St. Peter, and his audience was squatted on the floor. I remember distinctly having put on my Sunday moccasins, all ornamented with bead and quill work, for the important occasion.

The real pioneers of the missionary work of the Episcopal church in Minnesota were Rev. James Lloyd Breck and Rev. Timothy Wilcoxson. They preceded all the others. Mr. Breck purchased five or six acres of land at the head of St. Peter street and established a mission house, which was occupied for a long time. The Park Place Hotel afterward stood on this ground, and I believe the land still belongs to the Diocese of Minnesota.

Mr. Breck was a very enthusiastic man in his church work. He was young and physically capable of much endurance. It was a common thing for him to have an engagement to preach in a certain place on one day, and in another thirty or forty miles distant on the next, and he always made the journeys on foot. His pedestrian feats became well known among the old settlers. The first time I made a visit to the East, after my settlement up in the valley of the Minnesota, was in 1856 or 1857. I was driving across the twenty-mile prairie just above Fort Snelling on my way down the river, when I saw in the distance a long-legged apparition streaking it along in my direction, swinging a handbag and making apparently about 206 eight miles an hour. In the loom of the prairie it resembled very much a large sandhill crane, which we used to encounter frequently on our journeys in those days, but when we met it turned out to be the Reverend Mr. Breck on his way to Shakopoe to preach the next day. We always stopped and had a chat with all passers-by on the road. Knowing the habits of the parson as well as I did, I of course thought nothing of it.

When I got home in the East, I was invited to attend a missionary meeting in Utica by a clerical friend of mine, who wanted me to tell the people there something about the church in the Northwest. I went, and the first business that came before the meeting was a collection to raise a fund to purchase a horse and buggy for Mr. Breck. The mover of the scheme spoke of his wonderful feats of pedestrianism, and insisted that he should be rewarded by being presented with better means of transportation. That was my opportunity: I told my story of how I had met him within a few days on the lonely prairie, which I extended from twenty miles to about a hundred and twenty, and how footing it across a continent was a mere pleasant recreation for him; in fact I allowed my then fruitful imagination full swing, with the satisfactory result of swelling the donation to a sum that would have easily bought him a coach and four, and I have never repented the well intended exaggeration. Mr. Breck never went on foot afterward.

The estimation in which the memory of Mr. Breck is held at the present time in the church, may be measured by the fact that there prevailed a fierce controversy as to whether

California or Wisconsin, where he was earlier a pioneer missionary, should be the repository of his remains.

Doctor Van Ingen and Dr. Paterson arrived in the fifties; the former came first, and the latter about 1857. About this time the question was mooted of erecting Minnesota into a separate diocese, and it was accomplished. Then came the exciting consideration of who should be the bishop. Naturally Doctors Van Ingen and Paterson were the prominent candidates. The convention was held in St. Paul in 1859, and after many ineffectual ballots had been taken it seemed impossible to elect either of these two gentlemen. At every ballot a vote was cast for Henry B. Whipple of Chicago. No one knew 207 who he was, except that he was the rector of a church in that city. When it became a certainty that the vote could not be concentrated on either Van Ingen or Paterson, the friends of these candidates began to inquire about the ,“dark horse,” and the glowing account of him given by his friend settled the matter in his favor and he was chosen.

I have known Bishop Whipple for forty-five years. I knew him in Rome, New York, before he went to Chicago, and have loved and revered him during all those long years. It would be a waste of words for me to attempt a portrayal of his many virtues and perfect equipment for the duties of a frontier bishop; in all such accomplishments he was unsurpassed. He assumed his office, and the church began to grow and expand with marvelous strides until it has filled the land. He has spread the fame of Minnesota over the mother country of England, until his name, and that of his state, have become household words in the churches of that land. I have no hestitation in saying that to-day he is the most popular and best beloved man in all the state of Minnesota.

I can tell you an amusing anecdote about him that proves my assertion. Many years ago there lived in the town of Le Sueur a man, a great friend of mine, by the name of Bill Smith. Bill was an uncompromising Democrat like myself, and had the reputation of being a pretty blunt and rough sort of a fellow; at the same time he was one of the best citizens in the Minnesota valley. He lived next door to a brick edifice used as a church by the

Presbyterians, with only a picket fence between them. The people attending the church were in the habit of hitching their horses to his fence, and during services the horses would nibble the heads off of his pickets. Bill gave strict orders to his son to cut the halters of any teams that should be hitched to the fence. Bishop Whipple had some work in the town, and the Presbyterians kindly allowed him to use their church. Not knowing of the decree that had been promulgated by the infuriated Smith, the driver hitched the Bishop's team to the prohibited fence. The boy came in and said, “Dad, some of them church fellows have hitched to our fence.” “Go and cut their bridles,” said Smith. “It's Bishop Whipple's team,” said the boy. “Oh,” said Smith, “that's another matter, Bishop Whipple is the only man in 208 this state who can hitch his team to my fence, and if he wants to he can stable them in my parlor.”

The Bishop is peculiarly happy in attaching all kinds of people to him, good and bad, high and low. I remember when the Indian War broke out, in 1862, I brought out of New Ulm about eighty badly wounded men, and distributed them between Mankato and St. Peter, turning all the hotels and public buildings into hospitals for their convenience. A few days after their arrival, the bishop appeared at St. Peter unsolicited. He brought with him his dressing gown and slippers, and a case of surgical instruments, and camped down among us, where he remained for weeks, assisting the wounded and praying with the dying. That is the kind of work that endears a man to the people.

You all know that the Bishop has always been a great friend of the Indians. He believes that the Christian Indians, as he calls those who have shown some signs of recognition of the faith, performed a great many friendly acts towards the whites at the time of the massacre of 1862, and he loves to tell of it. When we all went up to dedicate the Birch Coulie Monument, Governor Marshall made a speech to prove that the inscription on the monument was all wrong. Then I followed, and, for complimenting the men who held the Indians off at the Birch Coulie fight, I dwelt on the splendid fighting qualities of the Sioux. Then the Bishop gave me a nudge and said, “I would give ten dollars for a five-minute talk.” I told the presiding officer to call upon him, and he exhausted his time by saying all

the good things he knew about the Indians. Then an irate party who came to hear the Indians denounced as murderers, red devils, and everything that was bad, rose and said, “We came here to dedicate a monument that commemorates one of the most barbarous and savage massacres of our people that was ever perpetrated, and what have we had? an attack upon the monument, and two glowing eulogies of the savage murderers.” The bishop and I had a good laugh over the predicament we had got the ceremonies into.

Speaking of the church: Shortly after Dr. Van Ingen came to St. Paul, I came down, in 1856, to the legislature as a representative from the Indian country. One of the first things we had to do was to elect a chaplain. I was not acquainted 209 with any of he candidates, and Dr. Van Ingen was nominated. His name was pronounced nearly like “Indian,” by the member who made the nomination. I had on moccasins, and on hearing the name, I said, “Ingen, Ingen, that's my man,” and we elected him. A very prominent young lawyer in St. Paul is named for him, John Van Ingen Dodd, whose mother was a prominent church woman.

TERRITORIAL POLITICS.

I have not said anything about the politics of the early days of Minnesota, and the reason is that there was very little going on that was worthy of the name until the first state election, which occurred on the 13th day of October, 1857. Prior to that, politics was either personal, Indian, or missionary.

The first attempt at politics in Minnesota occurred in Wisconsin, if I may use a paradox. That state was admitted into the Union in 1848, leaving all the territory west of the St. Croix without any government. Our people called a convention at Stillwater, and settled the affairs of the prospective new territory to be created out of the discarded part of Wisconsin. They assigned the capitol to St. Paul, the university to St. Anthony, the penitentiary to Stillwater, and the delegate in Congress to Mendota, then called St. Peter's. Henry H.

Sibley was duly chosen delegate from Wisconsin, and the act organizing the territory of Minnesota was passed by Congress on the 3rd of March, 1849.

Nothing occurred in the politics of the territory particularly worthy of mention in a paper like this, except, perhaps, that the legislature once, in a spasm of frontier virtue, passed a prohibitory liquor law, which was in a counter spasm speedily declared unconstitutional by the courts; but when the first state election was held, in which we were to elect members of Congress and a legislature that was to choose United States senators, things took a more national aspect, and politics really began. The Democrats had always been in power in the territory, and of course desired to hold that dominant position; but the Republican party, having been born three years before, had grown to considerable proportions. The whole state organization was to be elected, from the governor down; so the fight became quite interesting. 14

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A POLITICAL EPISODE.

With this introduction, I will relate an episode which occurred a week or so after the first state election closed. You must know that Pembina had, from the earliest days of the territory, been an election district, and being so remote from the seat of government, the election there was held before the time fixed in other parts of the Territory to enable it to get its election returns to the Territorial Auditor in St. Paul. This circumstance gave rise to the saying that Pembina always waited, in making its returns, to find out how many votes were necessary to carry the election for the Democrats, and then sent in the needed number. Of course, this was a Republican slander, but it was generally believed, as Pembina was then a *terra incognita* to everybody but Joe Rolette, Norman W. Kittson, and a few others who had Indian interests in that region. When all the votes but those of Pembina were in, it looked as if the result of the election was quite close, and all eyes were on Pembina. It was Supposed that Joe Rolette would be the bearer of the returns, and great interest was manifested by the Democrats lest Rolette should fall by the wayside

and the returns be lost, as we all knew that Joe was very susceptible to the allurements and temptations of civilization when within its influence.

While this important matter was in suspense, a man in the Indian trade by the name of Madison Sweetser came to me about two o'clock one night, or rather morning, and told me that Nat Tyson, who was a merchant in St. Paul and an enthusiastic Republican, had just started for the north with a fast team and an outfit that looked as if he contemplated a long journey, and his belief was that he meant to capture Rolette and the Pembina returns. I felt that such might be the case, and we immediately began to devise ways and means to circumvent him. We hastened to the house of Henry M. Rice, who knew every trader and half-breed between here and Pembina, and laid our suspicions before him. He diagnosed the case in an instant, and sent us to Norman W. Kittson, who lived in a stone house well up on Jackson street, with instructions to him to send a mounted courier after Tyson, who was to pass him on the road and either find Rolette or Major Clitherall, who was an Alabama man and one of the United 211 States land officers in the neighborhood of Crow Wing, being, of course, a reliable Democrat, and was to deliver a letter to the one he first found, putting him on guard against the supposed enemy. I prepared the letter and Kittson in a few moments had summoned a reliable Chippewa half-breed, mounted him on a fine horse, fully explained his mission, and impressed upon him that he was to reach Clitherall or Rolette ahead of Tyson if he had to kill a dozen horses in so doing. There was nothing a fine, active, young half-breed enjoyed so much as an adventure of this kind; a ride of four hundred miles had no terrors for him, and to serve his employer faithfully, no matter what the duty or danger imposed, was his delight. When he was ready to start, Kittson gave him a send-off in about the following words: “ *Va, va vite, et ne t'arrète pas mème pour sauver la vie* ” (Go, go quick, and don't stop even to save your life); and, giving his horse a vigorous slap, he was off like the wind.

The result was that he passed Tyson before he had gone twenty miles, found Clitherall a day and a half before Tyson reached Crow Wing, if he ever did get there, and delivered his letter. The major immediately started to find Rolette, which he succeeded in doing,

took the returns, put them in a belt around his person, and, having relieved Joe of all his responsibility, left him to his own devices, which meant painting all the towns red that he visited on his way.

The tone of the letter was so urgent and exciting that the major did not know but that half the Republicans in St. Paul might be lying in wait to capture him; so he did not enter town directly on his arrival, but went to Fort Snelling, left the returns with an army officer, and then proceeded to St. Paul. When we explained to him that no one but Rice, Sweetser, Kittson, and myself, knew anything about the matter, he was relieved, but still cautious. He waited a few days and then proposed to a lady to take a ride with him to Fort Snelling. When they started home again, he gave her a bundle and asked her to take care of it while he drove, which she unsuspectingly did; and that is the way the Pembina returns of Minnesota's first state election reached the proper custodian at the Capitol. It is needless to say how many votes they represented, but only to announce that the election went Democratic.

Whether Tyson had any idea of doing what we suspected him of, I never discovered, but if he did, he had a long ride for nothing; and as our scheme was so successful, I am willing to acquit him of the charge.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GEOGRAPHIC NAMES.

In looking over the map of Minnesota, and the Northwest generally, a thoughtful observer can read between the lines a good many things of interest not visible on the exterior. For instance, the nationality and religion of the first comers can easily be determined by the names of the rivers and cities. All over Minnesota and what we generally call the Northwest is written the fact that the first innovation made upon the Indian was by the Frenchman, and the Catholic Frenchman. We here find St. Paul, St. Anthony, St. Croix, which suggest the religion. Then we find Lac qui Parle, Traverse des Sioux, Trempealeau,

Pomme de Terre, and other French names, indicating the nationality. Some of the French names are original with them, and some are literal translations of the Indian names into French. For instance, take the name of Lac qui Parle, meaning the lake which speaks, or the talking lake. It got its name from the fact that it emits a constant sound of murmuring or gurgling, which naturally attracted the Sioux, and they named it M' Day-ea, or the Talking lake, which the French literally translated into Lac qui Parle. It was a very early post for the French traders, and has maintained the French name very much in its purity, the reason for which I attribute to the difficulty of corrupting it, the words being too simple to be distorted into anything else.

The same may be said of Traverse des Sioux, the crossing of the Sioux, the Indian name of which I have forgotten, but the words are so simple that it would be difficult to pronounce them incorrectly, except the “des” which is frequently called “dess,” as the name of the tribe of Indians called the Nez Percés, or Pierced Noses, is frequently pronounced “Ness Percies.”

When we cross over to the Pacific coast we find the unmistakable handwriting of the Catholic Spaniard. Here we have San Francisco, San José, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Diego, and, farther east, the river named Rio Grande del 213 Norte, which separates us from Mexico, all of which bespeak the Spaniard and the Catholic. In Mexico we find, besides many Spanish names, the unpronounceable names of the Aztecs, proving their previous occupancy of the country.

How long these landmarks of the nativity and religion of the early settlers will remain is doubtful. Some of them, like San Francisco, will endure as long as the country lasts and is inhabited by civilized people, for reasons quite apparent. But it must be kept in mind that they are not only rapidly disappearing, but that many of them have been twisted out of all possible recognition by the immigration which succeeded the French and the Spanish. With all our love and admiration of the American pioneer, we must admit that he could not as a general thing be called a man of culture, and especially was he not a linguist.

In ninety-nine cases out of every hundred he could not speak his own language without disturbing Lindley Murray in his coffin. So these French and Spanish names stood a very poor chance of being perpetuated in their purity through his agency.

I will now give you some instances of the utter annihilation of such names in our own state. There is a river in the southern portion of Minnesota which was in the early days of Indian trade navigable for Mackinac boats and canoes, and was much used. The navigation, however, was difficult and embarrassing, which gave it the name, by the French voyageur, of “La Rivière des embarras,” or the difficult river. Now the voyageur was usually a half-breed Indian; or, if a pure Frenchman, he spoke the Sioux language, which has many guttural sounds, and it tinctured his French. He usually spoke very rapidly, and made all the short cuts he could to the end he desired. When speaking of this river he always called it “Des embarras,” which, spoken quickly with a guttural intonation, gave the American settler the word “Zumbro,” and thus we have on our maps a Zumbro river and a town of Zumbrota.

Quite as curious and equally as effective an instance for the destruction of a name I will relate in connection with lake Superior. Most of you will remember the curious sandy beach formation at Duluth called Minnesota point. It is a long finger of land projected from the Minnesota shore toward the Wisconsin side, a distance of some six miles, to the natural 214 outlet of the St. Louis river into the lake. It is composed entirely of pebbles and sand thrown up from the bottom of the lake and held in place by the current of the St. Louis river meeting the wash of the lake, and presents a very curious and interesting subject for the scientist. Now, out in the lake somewhere, similar influences threw up a small island of the same material, which was in an early day quite dangerous to navigation. The French word for a pebble of this character is “galet.” So the French called this island “Isle aux Galets,” or the island of pebbles. In the early days of lake navigation the sailors and pilots were principally Canadian Frenchmen, and in speaking this name of

the island quickly it was caught by the American as “Skillegallee,” and it has actually so passed into the United States charts.

There is a town in Wisconsin on the Mississippi river called “Trempealeau.” It derives its name from a conical bluff near the present site of the town, which in very high water is surrounded by the river and becomes an island. The French called it “La Montagne qui trempe a l'eau” (the mountain which soaks in the water). The name of the town is wonderfully well preserved, very much better than in most cases; but I venture the assertion that not an inhabitant of it knows the origin of its name, unless he is a Frenchman.

I must relate a little circumstance connected with this town that occurred a good many years ago in the days of river travel. I was coming up the river on a steamboat, and, as the day was fine, I was sitting on the hurricane deck. The boats were full of tourists in those days, all anxious for information. The proprietors of the town had put up a large sign to attract attention, with one word, “Trempealeau.” A lady asked the captain in my presence what that meant and where it came from. He looked wise and said, “Madam, it is Winnebago.” She was perfectly satisfied, and I did not correct the information, which she probably recorded in her diary and communicated to her eastern friends. I have not as yet seen it in any authentic history, but will be not at all surprised to find it there some day.

To give you a further idea of the knowledge of the river captains in those days, I will relate a little incident which occurred on the upper Missouri once when I was ascending that stream in a boat called the “Twilight.” On the jackstaff 215 of this boat was a flag bearing the sign of a crescent moon, with a star perched on one of its horns. It was pretty and attracted my attention. An opportunity occurred one night which opened the way to my asking the captain the meaning of his legend. It was the curious coincidence of exactly the same sign appearing in the heavens. I suppose it was the preparation for the occultation of Venus; at any rate, the signs were identical. I called the captain's attention to it, and asked him what his flag signified. He carefully scanned the heavens, studied the flag, and

solemnly announced: “It is a sign of rain.” If, under such educational influences, anything of the past remains, it will be a miracle.

The gentlemen who laid out the town of Minneiska, down the river in this state, wrote to me for the name of “White Water” in Sioux, as they wished to name the town after the White Water river, which empties into the Mississippi river in that neighborhood. I wrote the name “Minne-ska,” white water. They mulled over it, and concluded that if ever a railroad went through the town the brakemen could not manage that name successfully, and called it by the more euphonious name, of Minneiska, which means nothing at all.

Then there is Mankato, which is a corruption of “Ma-ka-to,” or Blue Earth.

DESCRIPTIVE NAMES GIVEN BY THE SIOUX.

I passed several years among the Sioux Indians of this country, and was at one time United States Indian agent for them; so I naturally picked up some of their language, and learned their ways and customs.

An aboriginal people like these savages have very few wants, and consequently their language is very meager in its means of expression. Therefore, when new obects were presented to them, in order to talk about them among themselves they had to find names for them, and such names would, in the nature of things, be descriptive. When they first saw a white man he was a Frenchman. They called him “Wa-she-cha,” or the white man. The next appearance of the white man was the American soldier. The officers always carried a sword. The Indian had never seen so long a knife, and he called the American “Isan-tanka,” or the long knife. Afterward 216 came the German. His language fell harshly on the Indian ear, and they called him “Ea-shee-sha,” or the bad talker.

Perhaps one of the most illustrative cases of naming a person or thing by description is found in the name they gave me. When I first went into the Indian country, about forty-four years ago, I found a young Scotsman by the name of Garvie, and camped with him. The

Indians called him “Chun-ka-tokacha-wa-pa-ha,” or the man who wears the wolfskin cap. They gradually began to call me “the tall American,” or “Isan-tanka-hans-ka.” When I was not recognized by that name, they would say “Isan-tanka-hanska-ark-ho,” which means “the tall American who combs his hair back;” and if that failed to indicate my personality, they would say, “Isan-tanka-hanska-ark-ho, tepee Chunka-tokacha-wa-pa-ha,” which means, “the tall American who combs his hair back, who lives with the man who wears the wolfskin cap.” That became my name, but was usually shortened to “Ark-ho,” he who combs his hair back; and when I became their agent, it was changed to “Ah-tay,” or father.

You have heard, no doubt, that the thoughts of the wild Indian sometimes run in a poetical vein. This is true, and I will give you an instance of it which is in line with the idea I am presenting of the resort to description for naming persons and things. Of course, a Sioux Indian in his natural state never saw a domestic rooster or chicken cock. When immigration began to crowd them this splendid bird made his appearance. They observed his noble carriage, his beautiful plumage, and his defiant air; but none of these characteristics afforded ground for a name. They then discovered that he had the peculiarity of crowing before the dawn each morning, and they gave him his name from this circumstance. They called him “An-pay-ho-to-na,” or “the voice of the morning,” which may be rendered, “He speaks in the morning.” I, however, prefer the former as containing a really poetic expression.

Many such cases can be recalled. I will give you another that contains both the poetic and descriptive idea. Of course, before the advent of the whites, an Indian never saw the reflection of his face in anything but the surface of a lake or stream. When he was presented with a looking-glass he was 217 amazed to see the same phenomenon repeated. He called it “Minne odessa,” or “It looks like water.” I know that this name for a looking-glass is not the one given in the Dakota Dictionary. It is there called “Ih-di-yom-da-sin;” but I learned it, as I have given it, in the camps, and it struck me as very pretty, so I propose to stick to my original version, the dictionary to the contrary notwithstanding. In fact I am a good deal like a big Missouri friend I had out in the Sierra

Nevada mountains, by the name of Jim Gatewood. He used to write his letters in my office, and frequently asked me how to spell a word. I finally said, “Jim, why don't you look in the dictionary?” (There was a big Webster on the table.) “Wal, Judge,” he replied, “I never got the hang of them bloody dictionaries.” We see in these things a certain unstudied tinge of natural poetry.

When the steamboat appeared among them with its fiery furnaces and huge stacks, puffing out volumes of black smoke and sparks, they were amazed and called it by the only name that would naturally occur to them, “pata-wata,” or fire canoe.

The next phenomenon that came along was the railroad cars, propelled by fire as the steamboat was; and what do you think they called them? “The fire canoe that goes over the mountain.” As there were no railroads when I lived among the Indians, I cannot give you the Sioux for it except as I have since learned it, “Ha-ma-nee.” “Ma-nee” is to walk.

There was a Virginia friend of mine who, on his first seeing an express train go whizzing by, gave it a name equally descriptive. He called it “Hell in harness.”

You have often seen the flocks of wild geese as they fly over our state in their annual migrations from the south to the north and back again, and heard them squawk: the sound they make is expressed by the word “ma-ga,” and the Sioux calls the wild goose “ma-ga,” in exact imitation of his cry. An Indian will hide himself and call “ma-ga, ma-ga,” as a flock is passing, and deceive them into believing one of their number is in distress, and by this means turn the whole flock and get a shot at them.

There is another point to which I would like to draw your attention. Among the Sioux, the dog seems to be the generic type or standard for almost all animals. They call a dog 218 “chunka,” a wolf “chunka-toka-cha,” or the other dog, which is very appropriate, as the two animals very much resemble each other. The horse is called “wakon-chunka,” or the spirit dog; the panther or cougar, “enemu-chunka,” or the cat dog, a cat being called “enemu.”

This may extend to other animals, but I am fast forgetting my Sioux and cannot give more instances.

THE SIOUX MAIDEN FEAST.

The most interesting ceremony I remember having seen among the Sioux, was a trial to determine the fair fame of a young woman. The manner in which is was conducted, and the apparently correct decision arrived at, although the method of procedure was the very opposite of anything ever seen in a civilized court, was very impressive, and deeply interesting. I will endeavor to give you an idea of it. The name of the ceremony is “the maiden feast,” and it takes place under the following circumstances.

Whenever any gossip or scandal about any maiden in the band gains circulation, and reaches the ears of her mother, the latter commands her daughter to give a maiden feast to vindicate her character. The girl then summons all the maidens in the band to her feast at a certain time, which is announced through the band. When the hour arrives all the girls appear on the prairie; they all have a red spot painted with vermillion on each cheek. A large, round stone painted red is placed on the prairie, with a long knife stuck in the ground in front of it and close to it. The girls then form a semicircle in front of the stone and knife, and each one separately comes forward and touches the stone with her right hand, then falls back about twenty-five feet and sits down on the grass. The hostess, having taken her place with the rest, then retires and returns with a dish for each of her guests, on which is a small quantity of rice, and a knife or spoon to eat it with. After they are all helped, she takes her place in the circle, and they all begin slowly and in an unconcerned way to eat, not looking away from their dishes. The object of this is a challenge to any man in the band to publicly make any charge he may have against any of the girls: the touching the stone is regarded as a very sacred and solemn oath that the accused will tell the truth.

While these preliminary arrangements are being made, all the rest of the band, men, women, and children, have assembled, and every one awaits to see if any charge will be made. The manner of making an accusation, is for the party making it to step up in front of the girl, seize her by the hand and pull her to her feet. If nothing transpires before the rice is eaten, the giver of the feast is vindicated, her character restored, and her mother satisfied; then the feast is broken up and the actors disperse.

I cannot convey the idea of the making of a charge, and the trial of its truth or falsity, better than to relate what I witnessed on one of these occasions. When the circle was formed, a young buck stepped boldly in front of a very pretty girl of about sixteen or eighteen years, and roughly jerked her to her feet, and charged her with some indiscretion. The spectators watched the countenances of both parties with the closest scrutiny. The face of the accused became a study. She seemed paralyzed with indignation, and looked her accuser boldly in the eye with an expression of injured innocence so intense and agonizing as to prevent utterance. The two stood glaring upon each other in silence for a short time, when the man displayed symptoms of nervousness, which immediately attracted the audience, and they began crying out to the girl, “Swear! Swear!” This seemed to give her courage, and, wrenching herself forcibly from her accuser, she strode with a queenly air to the stone and almost embraced it. This together with an apparent weakening of the man, seemed to convince the people of her innocence, and they began to jeer and howl at him until he commenced to back from his position, when about fifty men and boys closed in on him, and he fled like a scared antelope, with the crowd at his heels, hurling sticks and stones at him until he disappeared from sight. I never was more satisfied with the correctness of a decision in all my experience.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME ITASCA.

In speaking of the origin of names of natural objects in our state, one of the most interesting is “Itasca,” which is the name of the lake now known to be the true source of

the Mississippi river. Most people think it is an Indian word, but such is not the case. It is a coined word, and was made under the following circumstances.

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It has always been an object of interest to know where this great river has its source. More than fifty years ago, when Gen. Lewis Cass was governor of Michigan, his territory included all that is now Minnesota, and he made a voyage of discovery to find the source of the river. He ascended in birch canoes until he reached the large lake now known as Cass lake, and not finding any inlet he decided it to be the source, and did not pursue his investigations further. This lake was from that time called Cass lake, and was supposed to be the head of the river. Some years afterward Mr. Schoolcraft undertook the same exploration, and, finding a considerable inlet to Cass lake, he advanced to its sources, and found a small lake which he was convinced was the true head, which our historical society has since absolutely verified. Schoolcraft was not a man of much education, and knew little Latin and less Greek. He wanted a name for his lake that would be agreeable to the ear and appropriate to the subject. He had with him a gentleman, who recently died in Stillwater, Rev. William T. Boutwell, whom he consulted on the important subject of naming his new-found lake. This person took two Latin words, “veritas,” truth, and “caput,” the head, which Schoolcraft cut down, to retain only the last two syllables of “veritas,” making “Itas,” and the first syllable of “caput,” making “ca.” He then joined them and made the beautiful word “Itasca” or the true head. A more skillful or beautiful feat in a literary point of view was never achieved.

You will find this name accounted for erroneously in some of the editions of Webster's Dictionary. tie says it is taken from two Indian words, “Ia” and “totosha,” meaning, I have found the breast of the woman, or the source of life. This is entirely unfounded, as the words can not be tortured into making the word Itasca; and we know without a doubt that the explanation I give is absolutely correct. Some one fooled Webster. It is true that the

words he quotes are strictly good Chippewa, and mean what he says they do, “Ia,” I have found, and “to-to-sha,” the female breast; but they are utterly foreign to the name “Itasca.”

Another illustration of the descriptive nomenclature of the Sioux is found in the name they give a piano, “chan-da-wa-ki-ya-pee,” which means an instrument made of wood that talks music.

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OLD NAMES PASSING AWAY.

It occurs to me that we have an illustration of the fact that original names are fast passing away in our own state and city. We have a county of Wabasha, a city of Wabasha, and in St. Paul a Wabasha street. All these names come from an Indian chief whom I knew very well and highly respected. He was a chief of the “Wak-pay-ku-ties,” or leaf-shooters, and his name was “Wa-pa-sha,” not Wabasha. “Wapa” means a leaf, a staff, and a bear's head; “sha” means red. So his name meant either Red Leaf, Red Staff, or Red Bear's Head. We always thought it meant the Red Leaf. This corruption between Wabasha and Wapasha is not of so much importance; but it is well, while we can, to get things right. It amounts to about as much as Thompson with a “p,” or Thomson without a “p.”

Another instance exists right in our own midst. Robert street was named after Louis Robert, pronounced “Robear,” a prominent Frenchman among the old settlers, and Until quite recently was always given the French pronunciation “Robear” but the newcomers all call it Robert street. I was in a streetcar the other day and told the conductor to put me off at “Robear” street. He promptly informed me that I was on the wrong car. It will not be long before the correct name will be forgotten.

INDIAN MEDICINE MEN.

A singular thing among the Sioux Indians was their faith in their medical mysteries. There is a guild among them called medicine men. They work wonders with the sick and afflicted.

I have known men sick with rheumatism to be cured by the medicine men rattling gourds full of beans over their prostrate forms, and chanting in a manner calculated to kill the sick and destroy the nerves of the well. I have had them bring to me the evidence of their success in various ways. One man was sick unto death with rheumatism. The medicine men worked over him for several days and finally produced an old-fashioned flint-style gunlock, which they extracted from his afflicted back. They showed me this in triumph. I read on it “Harper's Ferry” in very plain English. I have had them show me live frogs and snakes which they had taken out of their patients.

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Now, it is easy to understand how the medicine man can humbug his patients. We see this every day in civilized life. But how the medicine man can be humbugged in the same way it is difficult to understand. But such is undoubtedly the case. When an old friend of mine, named Shakopee, who was a medicine man, became sick at the Redwood Agency, I sent my doctor down to see him. I was then represented by Dr. Daniels, now one of the most prominent physicians in the state, living at St. Peter. He reported that he was sick with typhoid fever, and that all he needed was good nursing, good food, and rest. I had the facilities for all these conditions, and sent an ambulance to bring him to my agency. But he positively refused, and had the medicine men drum and rattle beans over him until he died. Now, this has always been to me a problem; do these savages actually believe in their medicine, and that they get gunlocks, snakes, frogs and such things out of their patients? or would they rather die under the same treatment than confess their frauds by accepting civilized methods? I confess that I have never been able to solve the problem, and when my old friend Shakopee stuck to the barbaric treatment unto death, I rather inclined to the opinion that they were really in earnest. It is an interesting question, and, having given the facts, I turn the psychological part of it over to the thinkers.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I have given you a general melange of everything, which contains very little of anything; and if I have amused, interested, or instructed you, in any degree, I am well repaid.